

COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS.

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RESEARCH SECTION MEMORANDUM (R.S.M.8)

ADDENDUM NO.10.

NEW SOUTH WALES AND VICTORIA.

NOTES ON EMPLOYMENT IN CERTAIN SKILLED TRADES

NOVEMBER, 1940

Trades which have been dealt with in this and recent reports and which it is proposed to deal with in future are:

<u>Month</u>	<u>New South Wales</u>		<u>Victoria</u>	
August ..	Engineering and Metal Trades		Engineering and Metal Trades	
September	Building ..	..	Building ..	..
	Textiles ..	..	Textiles ..	..
October..	Rubber ..	..	Rubber ..	..
	Paper and Printing ..	..	Paper and Printing ..	..
	Timber, Furniture, etc. ..	..	Timber, Furniture, etc. ..	..
November	Engineering and Metal Trades		Engineering and Metal Trades	
December	Building ..	..	Building ..	..
	Textiles ..	..	Textiles ..	..

ENGINEERING AND METAL TRADES:

In the last three months, the demand for skilled metal trade workers has increased further, mainly due, of course, to the expansion of defence work. Many of the factories visited are now engaged principally on defence work, and almost all report shortages of skilled tradesmen. In many cases, the lack of skilled men is restricting production in spite of the fact that long overtime is very general. In many factories, skilled metal tradesmen are working 20 hours a week overtime or more, and several of our reports suggest that this is affecting the men's health and efficiency as well as their tempers.

This shortage is being relieved to some extent because the factories are now receiving men who have been trained in the technical colleges under the Commonwealth scheme. All our reports agree that these trainees are proving satisfactory, though the benefits of the scheme so far seem to have been felt more in Melbourne than in Sydney. The number of men in training at the technical colleges, however, is restricted by the lack of machine tools available for training and by the need for more buildings. We have also been told that the lack of any definite information about the number of trained men who will ultimately be needed is preventing the scheme from developing fully. One firm suggested that the necessity for good foremen was not sufficiently realised, and that a co-ordinated training scheme for foremen was necessary.

There are almost universal reports of an acute shortage of untrained youths, but our reports are almost equally unanimous that plenty of unskilled men are available. Our interviews suggest that there is still scope for transferring semi-skilled men to the easier skilled jobs and filling their places with untrained men. In some cases, the main obstacle to this course seems to be the higher cost of employing men instead of boys, who are almost unprocurable. Several of the Sydney firms which use female labour also complain of a scarcity of girls.

The supply of raw materials in the metal industries seems to be working much more smoothly than three months ago. There are now few complaints of difficulty in securing material for defence work, though supplies for civilian work are certainly scarce. This appears to be true particularly for non-ferrous metals and certain types of steel and steel products.

Apart from those about the shortage of skilled men, complaints generally by manufacturers seem to be less frequent than they were in August. There have, however, been some complaints that the placing of defence orders has been unnecessarily delayed, with the result that they have to be rushed through when they are eventually given. It seems, too, that some factories are getting less defence orders than they could handle, and consequently they have idle plant,

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while others are unable to cope with the orders they have received. This difficulty, however, seems to have been overcome to a large extent in the last three months.

The position, as far as we have been able to judge it from our reports, is set out below for particular types of skilled labour.

Tool makers, Turners, Fitters, Pattern makers, Coppersmiths, and Machinists.

There are virtually no unemployed workers in these trades, and there is a definite shortage of labour, both in New South Wales and Victoria. Shortages appear to be particularly acute in the case of tool makers, coppersmiths, turners and machinists. The scarcity has been relieved to some extent by Government trainees and by using semi-skilled men for the simpler skilled jobs. The union sees no prospect of as many men being trained as will be needed by June, 1941, but believes that too many skilled men are still being retained in the armed forces, particularly in the R.A.A.F.

Boilermakers and Welders.

The union reports that there are no unemployed boilermakers or first-class welders, and that very heavy overtime is being worked. The shortage has been relieved to some extent by dilution with iron workers, but it will be hard to overcome, as boilermakers cannot be trained quickly for a special job as engineers can. At present the naval ship-building programme is limited by the number of skilled men available.

Moulders.

There is no unemployment, and a definite shortage of men in Victoria. The shortage in Sydney is said to be not yet serious, and the union suggests that it could be overcome by giving moulders more semi-skilled assistants so that they can concentrate on the skilled work. Since moulders usually make machines rather than munitions, the union believes that the scarcity will not become so acute as it will for engineers.

Sheet metal workers and Tinsmiths.

There are no unemployed, and the shortage of men is becoming more serious, and is restricting production. Overtime is common, and many men who left the industry during the depression are said to have returned to it.

Electrical fitters and mechanics.

The union reports that, although there is practically full employment, there are no serious shortages of skilled men, either in Melbourne or in Sydney. Melbourne companies are still lending electricians to one another. It is expected that a decline in civilian work will probably prevent the shortage from becoming acute.

Iron workers.

Three months ago, the union reported fairly heavy unemployment among its members in New South Wales. The position has now changed completely, and there is almost full employment in Victoria, South Australia, and New South Wales, except for a few unemployed at Newcastle. Many iron workers are assistants to skilled men, such as boilermakers, moulders and engineers, and are therefore semi-skilled rather than unskilled workers. Part of the increase in employment is probably due to the elevation of iron workers to the simpler skilled jobs in an attempt to overcome the shortage of highly skilled workers.

Vehicle and Motor builders.

There has been some recovery in the motor trade in recent months in both Victoria and New South Wales. Consequently, employment has increased, and there is reported to be no surplus of skilled men because many have gone to defence industries. Many semi-skilled members of this union have also drifted to other industries, and few of them are now unemployed, though no shortage is likely.

Agricultural implement makers.

Employment of these workers in Victoria is only moderate, but unemployment has fallen because of a drift to other industries.